



## Indoor Mold and What to do About it.

It takes moisture to keep mold alive. Since mold is a form of fungus, it doesn't need sunlight like a plant. Instead of photosynthesis, mold gets energy from whatever host it is living on. The host needs a source of moisture such as a roof leak, or a leaky pipe or faucet. The host can be drywall, a carpet, some discarded clothing. This host stays moist and feeds the mold. If the moisture is removed, then the host will eventually dry and the mold will die. In a humid summer, it could take a long time for the host to dry up. Mold is scarce in winter.

Mold thrives in nature, and it shoots mold spores into the atmosphere...millions of them. The spores float around and eventually may settle on a damp spot in your house. A little mold is harmless, and even a lot of mold doesn't pose much health threat if you're not allergic to it. When mold has proven harmful is when exposure has been to an abundance of mold over time. Mold that abundant has usually been observed for some time because mold makes a dramatic appearance when it starts living

on an indoor host. It's greenish or grayish splotches on a surface that used to be solid and not green at all. Please note that there are no documented cases where illnesses have been caused by hidden molds in houses.

Once you've detected mold in your house, it's fairly easy to get rid of. Soap and water will eliminate it most of the time. You can also try diluted bleach. I've used bleach successfully with mold on drywall. Remember to also eliminate the water source. Mold needs water, so it doesn't show up much in a desert even though it's warm. Fix your roof or pick up the clothes. Mildew is mold invading damp clothes or towels.

## Don't Forget to Winterize Your Home

It's that time of the year, and, hopefully, you've taken steps to winterize your home and pay less on your fuel bill. Winterizing your home consists mostly of sealing up the air leaks in your doors and windows. For those of you without storm windows, it could mean taping plastic over your north and west windows every winter.

The ideal time to do this is in the fall, but it's not too late in early winter to try and cut down on your heating bill. Cut down on the drafts of outside air into the house, and you can save on the energy bill.

Eliminating the drafts can be achieved through such measures as caulking and weatherstripping, as well as covering your windows with plastic. These simple measures can be effective in lowering a propane bill.

Also, you should insulate any exposed water lines, keep your thermostat at 55 ° or higher if you go on vacation. Don't forget to change



filters on your furnace. Also, remember our article about Vampire Power loss from appliances left plugged in. So unplug and save.

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## **CARBON MONOXIDE: A WINTER HAZARD**

Carbon monoxide is an invisible, and odorless gas which can be harmful in small doses, and deadly in larger doses. Indoor exposure can come from unvented indoor space heaters, from using gas generators indoors, from leaky home furnaces. Never put the generator inside if you use one. Generators burn fuel and have no venting system, so carbon monoxide is released directly into the air. The basement is still part of the house, so don't run the generator in the basement.

## **Emergency Situations Can Be Shocking: Be Prepared**

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There are many kinds of emergencies. The most recent kind we have faced on the Kickapoo Reservation was the ice storm of 2007. It caught a lot of us unprepared. Many people stayed at the casino and experienced stress related to lifestyle changes and being around so many people all of the time. At least their needs were being met.

During that time, some people were stressed over their pets. How could they abandon them (Pets weren't allowed in the casino)? Who would feed and water the pets if they couldn't get to their homes for a few days. This was a problem experienced by some tribal members.

The clinic was closed a long time. Prescriptions were running out. There was no doctor on hand. It would have been reassuring to have seen one during those times.

Some people stayed at home and did the best they could. A few of them had generators to assist them. Generators can be

very helpful when the power is out for a spell, but you need to know how to handle them safely or you can run into such problems as carbon monoxide poisoning. Don't burn fossil fuels indoors to generate a motor. The generator has to be outside, or indoor air becomes contaminated quickly.

The more prepared you are for the emergency, the better off you'll be. During the ice storm, it was apparent that some people were not prepared, and some probably didn't know how to prepare. The purpose of this article is to help you prepare.

Keep your cell phone charged up to keep contact with outside agencies. The ice storm downed a lot of phone and power lines, and many people were cut off for extended periods. A cell phone can be valuable during such times. Also, keep a battery operated radio on hand because your TV won't be operating, and there might not be any newspapers delivered our way for a few

days. The radio can help keep you informed of what's going on and can tell you how big the emergency is.

Keep a three day supply of food and water in your home at all times. Roads might be impassable. Stores might be closed for days. Keep adequate nourishment in home storage.

Have matches on hand, as well as candles. Propane can usually still provide some heat or cooking fuel, though you may have to bypass electronic ignitions with a match.

Have some boardgames on hand, and maybe a deck of cards to provide fun activities when computers and TV's can't run.

Check on others, if you can, especially the elderly or disabled. If such an emergency occurs again, we have purchased emergency cots and blankets. These emergency supplies have been turned over to the Kickapoo Fire Department.